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and fowling under equable Boreal skies on a now submerged land surface off the present coast of County Antrim. Boats were already in use, for the Irish Channel River prevented land communication with Scotland. The Litorina submergence of Atlantic times followed, when a fishing and collecting culture was evolved (Late Larnian), with new tools adapted to meet the changed conditions and with a component of heavy woodworking implements. The submergence severed the earlier close cultural relations between northeastern Ireland and southwestern Scotland, so that later Mesolithic influences from Lowland Britain are rare in Ireland. Two innovations, however, mark the beginning of the Neolithic period—the Campignian industry coming across Britain and the Megalithic civilization carried by seafarers from Iberia—and to these new cultures must be added the vigorous reaction of the indigenous Mesolithic folk in the specialized fishing culture of the Bann. Finally, the Mesolithic remnants seem to have retreated to the sand-dune areas of the north and west coasts, where they clung to a basically food-gathering economy far into the historical period. "Thus in insular isolation on the outermost periphery of Western Europe," Dr. Movius concludes, "the doctrine of survival, which is so outstandingly applicable to the later periods, pertains with equal force to the original settlers."

This study carries us as far as we are likely to get for many years in view of the wartime cessation of archeological activities in Northern Ireland; the leaders and inspirers of the expedition, with the author and the publisher, are to be congratulated on the successful outcome of this part of the research program. We may hope that when the time comes to take up the spade once more, undisturbed settlement sites will be found to confirm and develop the thesis so ably expounded by the author.—E. ESTYN EVANS

MARCO POLO'S PRECURSORS. By LEONARDO OLSCHKI. ix and 100 pp.; map, index. The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, 1943. $1.50. 8¾ x 5¾ inches.

The far-reaching conquests of Genghis Khan opened Asia to a handful of European travelers in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The greatest among them was Marco Polo, but the journeys of the pioneers who preceded him on the long trails to Mongolia and the northern border of China are well known. Unlike other writers on the history of geographical exploration, Dr. Olschki is not concerned in this little book with the adventures of the Franciscan friars John of Pian del Càrpine and William of Rubruk or of the two elder Polos, or with the precise identification of their routes. His interest lies, rather, in what these enterprises signify in regard to the nature and development of the medieval mind.

These travelers "transformed into an empirical reality the fabulous image of [Asia] . . . created by poetry and fiction and confirmed by a tenacious traditional erudition." For the magical Orient of earlier medieval lore they substituted in the Western consciousness an Orient based, in part at least, on detailed personal observation. They were, however, men of the Middle Ages, and what they observed and how they recorded their observations reflected the intellectual character of the period. The friars took no notes in the field but relied on extraordinarily retentive and probably accurate memories in composing their narratives. Dr. Olschki comments on the lack of system and coherence in the presentation of their impressions. The medieval mind, profoundly systematic in abstract thought, was strangely lacking in an ability that we associate with modern science—the ability to organize the observations of concrete realities.

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"Friar John's curiosity in Asiatic matters is mainly directed toward the features, habits, customs, laws, manner of living and superstitions of the exotic peoples he described, neglecting everything not closely associated with their life and history." Friar William had a keener appreciation of physical geography and ethnography, but both friars, and Marco Polo as well, were almost totally oblivious to the vegetation of the regions they traversed. Neither tree nor plant is mentioned in Friar William's narrative. In contrast with the enthusiasm of Marco Polo, the ecclesiastical travelers felt and expressed aversion and contempt for the Asiatic peoples and religions.

These thirteenth-century journeys were possible only because of the religious tolerance of the Mongol rulers, who took a considerable interest in Christianity. Dr. Olschki maintains that the elder Polos failed to recognize the practical character of this interest. To Kublai Khan, Western Christianity meant knowledge that could be used to advantage—art, science, technology, the control of occult powers. Kublai returned the two Venetians to Europe with a request that the Pope "send him as many as a hundred intelligent men devoted to the Christian faith and acquainted with the Seven Arts." The brothers were also instructed to bring oil from the lamp that burned before the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem and doubtless journeyed westward "convinced that they were fulfilling a mission for the faith which would redound to the glory of Christianity." The "faith," however, meant to Kublai nothing more than a useful tool for extending his own temporal power.

THE OCEANS: Their Physics, Chemistry, and General Biology. By H. U. SVERDRUP, MARTIN W. JOHNSON, and RICHARD H. FLEMING. x and 1087 pp.; maps, diagrs., ills., bibliogrs., indexes. Prentice-Hall, Inc., New York, 1942. $10.00. 9¼ x 6 inches.

Oceanography, in common with other sciences, had its beginnings in the observation and the verbal, sometimes rhetorical, description of natural phenomena. The earlier phase persisted well into the modern age, and even the great *Challenger* expedition (1872–1876) was concerned chiefly with the acquisition of simple and fundamental data and of geological and biological specimens, most of which were subsequently classified and interpreted by familiar, or at least not startlingly new, means.

If we go back somewhat farther—to 1855, for example, when Matthew Fontaine Maury published within a single year five editions of "The Physical Geography of the Sea" and thus codified a department of science that had originally been proposed by Alexander von Humboldt—the transition between the past and the present takes on a truly ruptive aspect. Maury's first chapter is devoted to the Gulf Stream, and its opening paragraph has a Miltonic, if not Biblical, sound. The authors of "The Oceans" begin their discussion of the cognate subject—ocean currents—with the words quoted below and then proceed to elucidate throughout 80 pages in which a large proportion of the text stands in the form of dynamic equations.

"Our knowledge of the currents of the ocean would be very scanty if it were based entirely on direct observations, but, fortunately, conclusions as to currents can be drawn from the distribution of readily observed properties such as temperature and salinity. When drawing such conclusions, one must take into account the acting forces and apply the laws of hydrodynamics and thermodynamics as derived from theoretical considerations or from generalizations of experimental results."

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